



## Facts About DES & Reproductive Complications

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) – a synthetic estrogen that was prescribed to pregnant women during 1938—1971 to prevent miscarriages or premature delivery – has been linked to several health risks. Included among these, is an increased risk of reproductive complications and infertility among DES Daughters – women who were exposed to DES in the womb.

Research available through CDC's *DES Update* currently confirms the following facts pertaining to the affect of DES exposure on a woman's risk for reproductive complications and infertility.

### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RISKS

- DES Daughters are at an increased risk for reproductive tract structural differences; pregnancy complications, such as ectopic (tubal) pregnancies and preterm deliveries; and infertility.
- Studies have shown that up to a third of DES Daughters were born with or developed some form of reproductive tract abnormality of the cervix, uterus, or Fallopian tubes.
- Of DES Daughters, 64 percent carried their first pregnancy to term, compared with 85 percent of unexposed women. Approximately 20 percent of DES Daughters experience preterm labor, compared with 8 percent of unexposed women.
- Estimates of a DES Daughter's risk for an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy range from three to five times higher than the risk of an unexposed woman.
- According to a 2000 study published in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 20 percent of DES Daughters had a miscarriage during their first pregnancy, compared with approximately 10 percent of unexposed women.
- According to a 2001 infertility study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 24 percent of DES Daughters were unable to become pregnant, compared with 18 percent of unexposed women. Additionally, 28 percent of DES Daughters had tried for 12 months to become pregnant without success, compared with 16 percent of unexposed women.

### ASSESSING LIKELIHOOD OF DES EXPOSURE

- CDC's DES Update Web site provides a Self-Assessment Guide featuring a series of questions designed to help individuals assess their likelihood of DES exposure.
- An interactive version of CDC's DES Update Self-Assessment Guide is free and available online at [www.cdc.gov/DES](http://www.cdc.gov/DES), and individuals can also request a printed version by calling toll-free at 1-888-232-6789.